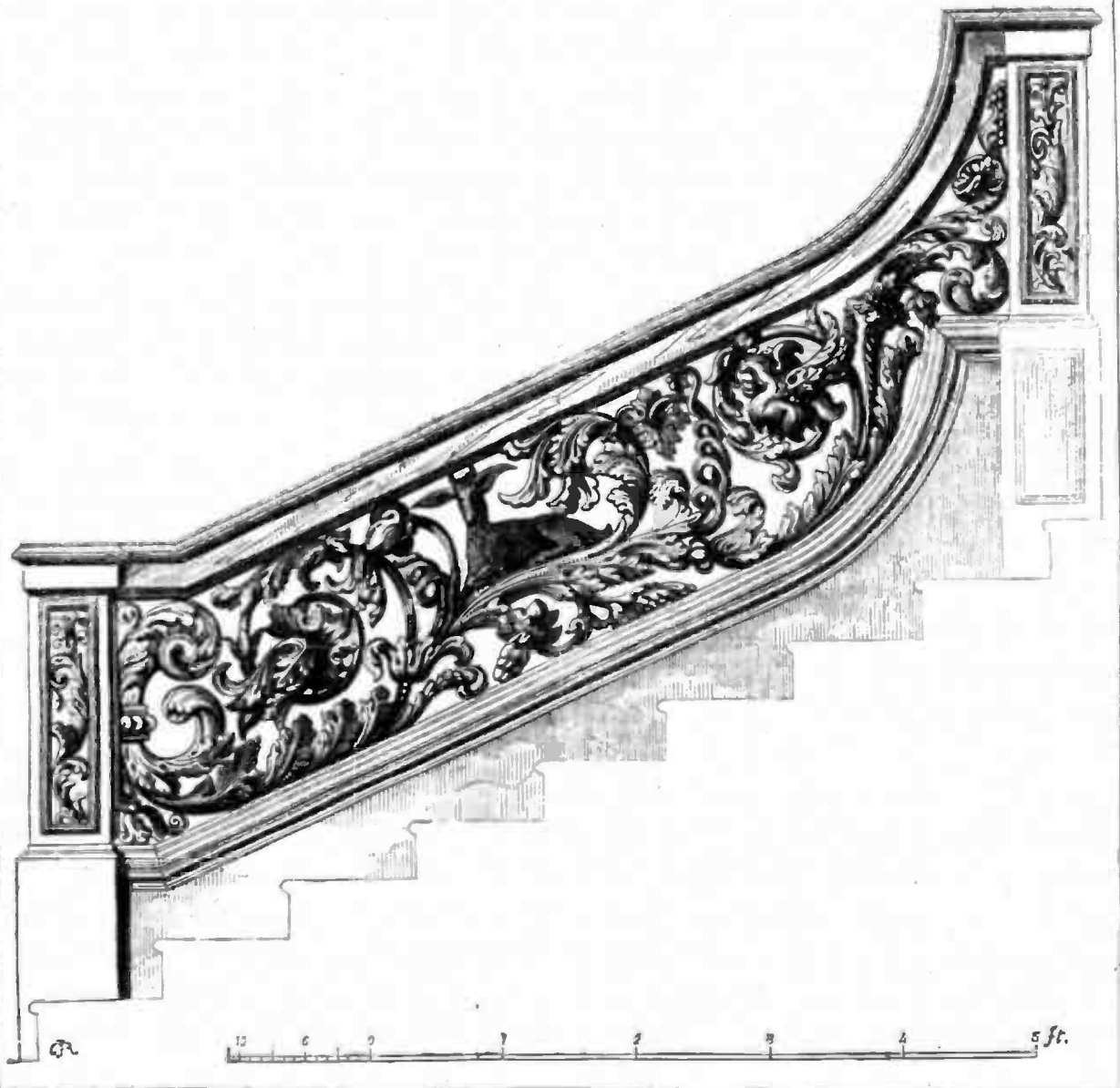


CARVED STAIRCASE, BELSIZE HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD.



CARVED STAIRCASE, BELSIZE HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD.

THE richly-carved staircase still remaining in the old portion of Belsize House, Hampstead, is well deserving a careful inspection; it is a more elaborate, but certainly not so elegant a specimen as the one by Inigo Jones, given in a former number of the BUILDER; but this staircase is of late date, either that of the reign of James II. or the one following, when the architecture of the day was overflowing with heavy and senseless ornament. Belsize House was at that time in the possession of the Earl of Chesterfield, and we can imagine that the greater portion of the old building having been pulled down, some new parts and rich decorations were added to it by that nobleman. The staircase is of considerable size; there are four large compartments, of which the print shows the first on the ground floor, and four smaller ones: the whole of these are varied in design, and the carving perfect on both sides. The effect of it at present is rather injured by being painted to imitate bronze.

Belsize House was, a century back, a celebrated and rather depraved place of amusement; the accounts respecting it are very curious. It was necessary for the protection of its visitors, to have first twelve and afterwards twenty "stout fellows completely arm'd, to patrol betwixt London and Belsize, to pre-

vent the insults of highwaymen or footpads, which may infest the road." A comic poem of the date 1722 declares—

—"that thirty men shall be
Upon the road for their security;
But whether one-half of this rabble-guard,
(Whilst t'other half 's asleep on watch and ward,
Don't rob the people they pretend to save,
I to the opinion of the reader leave."

Full accounts of this place will be found in Lyson's "Environs" second volume, in Park's "Topography of Hampstead," or in the fourth volume of the "Pictorial History of England;" the latter work gives a representation of the front of the house, copied from a very rare print.

C. J. RICHARDSON.

PROPOSED NEW UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

IN consequence of the great increase in the number of candidates for matriculation in the University of London this year, the chambers of the University at Somerset House not being sufficiently spacious to accommodate the whole of them, the principal of King's College, on being applied to, placed one of the lecture-rooms of that institution at the disposal of the senate during the examination. This want of room shews the necessity, and suggests the propriety, of erecting a structure, that shall be

ornamental to the first city of the empire, worthy of the age in which we live, and suitable to the present and future wants of a Metropolitan University. The editor of the *Morning Chronicle* has recently penned a few remarks on the subject. He says: "The present 'apartments' have become ludicrously insufficient for the purposes for which they are required. What must be the impression on the mind of a stranger (drawing his idea of the appearance of an English university from the noble piles of building which adorn our ancient seats of learning) when he asks for the University of London, and is directed to a staircase (which he of course takes for the porter's lodge)—and, on entering, sees written up in large characters, 'University of London on the second floor!'" The second floor might indeed do well enough for the cradle of the University; but seeing that this institution is no longer an infant, but now in the eighth year of its age—that it is already fed by twenty-five colleges, and threatens to become a very giant in stature,—it does seem but common justice to give it room enough to stretch its limbs in. It has been 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd' long enough. It ought to have a proper 'local habitation' now that it has acquired a 'name.' And, seriously, now that the legislature are providing so humbly for the Irish colleges, we think that something ought to be done for the benefit of colleges in England."

* See Vol. II. p. 554.